

## Plain Language Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>1. The most important information is at the top or beginning.</b> Example: If an agent needs to take action, state that in the subject line, a heading, or first paragraph.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>2. The call to action is highlighted and in active voice.</b> <b>Instead of:</b> The application must be completed by the applicant and postmarked by June 1. <b>Write:</b> You must send your application by June 1.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>3. Headings guide readers through the document.</b> Headings can be questions, statements, or topics. They should break the information into logical sections.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>4. The wording is easy to read.</b> Use short, common words and avoid jargon. Use a <a href="#">readability calculator</a> to test the reading level.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>5. At least 90 percent of the sentences are in active voice.</b> Active voice makes it clear who is supposed to do what. Not "It must be done," but "You must do it."</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>6. The average sentence length is 20 words or less.</b> Express only one idea in each sentence. Break up your idea into its parts, and make each one the subject of its own sentence.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>7. Lists with three or more items are in bullets.</b> Vertical lists are easy to read. They can help readers see all the steps in a process.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>8. The average paragraph length is five sentences or less.</b> Write short paragraphs and include only one topic in each paragraph.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>9. The formatting is easy to read.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't use all caps or underline. Instead, use bold for emphasis.</li> <li>• Use italics only for legal citations.</li> <li>• Make sure the font size is easy to read.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>10. The document explains how to get help.</b> Did you include a phone number, website, or other contact for people who need more information?</p>